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ABSTRACT

The Inservice Teacher Cultural Immersion Model of Indiana University has placed 122 inservice teachers in summer graduate practicum positions in distant Native American communities. The model was developed so that teachers can have an innovative and personal experience learning about Native Americans in their own cultural setting. The program involves graduate courses, practicum site preparation, and independent and group preparatory activities before teacher placements. Teachers are placed in Native American sites with host site supervisors for a period of 6 to 10 weeks. The participants are responsible for keeping detailed weekly summaries of their experiences as well as preparing lesson plans and/or materials for "back home" teaching. A series of evaluation activities are carried out by the project director, host site supervisors, and project staff. At the end of the practicum placement, participants provide structured, evaluative information on their experiences. The onsite experience for the participants has resulted in broadened awareness of cultural differences and actual changes in communication patterns. Interaction with Native American children on a daily basis leads to heightened sensitivity toward their needs and increased achievement by the teachers. (MD)

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Cultural Immersion for Inservice Teachers: A Model and Some Outcomes

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Teachers today can expect to teach children and interact with parents from diverse cultural, economic, and religious groups. Educational job opportunities, marriage, affirmative action, family responsibilities and other forces often lead teachers from familiar childhood communities to other areas of the nation or the world. Even those teachers who procure employment close to home often discover that economic, political, and social forces are significantly changing the characteristics of student groups in local schools. For example, school board decisions to enroll all first graders (and only first graders) in designated schools in south Texas border towns mean that involved first grade teachers will instruct Anglos, Mexican-Americans, Blacks, migrants, and perhaps aliens simultaneously. World political strife certainly has contributed to the enrollment of Laotian children in cities like Indianapolis and to increased enrollment of Cuban children in south Florida communities. Oak Park, Michigan is another example of a diverse community with Chaldean Arab, Black, and Jewish youth well represented in school enrollment figures.

It is important that teachers learn about the culture, history, accomplishments, and aspirations of the diverse social groups they serve. Furthermore, it is important that teachers help all students to know, respect and understand each other -- to appreciate the richness and situational appropriateness of different cultures, to recognize and reject dehumanizing cultural misconceptions and stereotypes. Socially conscious teachers in this democracy simply cannot subscribe to the statement "we don't need to learn about those people because we don't have any of them in this town."

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Conventional Teacher Education

Very often inservice teachers are graduates of teacher certification programs that were not designed to emphasize multicultural education, cultural pluralism, or interethnic relations. Multicultural components to undergraduate teacher preparation programs have been added gradually over the past few years but generally have not been tailored to the graduate degree or professional development needs of experienced teachers.

Inservice teacher education very frequently involves the completion of content or methods oriented university courses on campus, short topical workshops on a university campus or in one of the school system buildings, brief lectures or motion pictures or consultant presentations at the end of a school day, or an occasional day or half-day instructional goal setting/planning session. Universities, school systems, and local teacher organizations generally organize the inservice sessions, select the topic, provide the materials, and choose the instructors. A teacher usually completes inservice activities with a population of learners similar to one's self in a familiar local setting using mass media produced materials often authored by members of the dominant cultural group.

Conventional inservice education sessions and activities then seldom focus upon cross-cultural content, interactions, values, activities, challenges, and aspirations. There are, however, many teachers very aware of the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and culturally pluralistic characteristics of the nation's schools, who seek opportunities to broaden their cultural knowledge and sensitivity. Just as it is possible to move undergraduate teacher education majors off the campus and to provide them with "real-life" student teaching experiences, it is possible to place interested inservice teachers away from

their classrooms and provide them with "real life' cultural immersion practicums. This paper is designed to acquaint inservice teachers, instructional specialists, and teacher educators with a replicable model for intensely involving teachers in both "academic" and "in-the-field" study of various cultural groups. The model rests upon assumptions that ethnic minority people have much to teach and share, that direct participation in lives of people leads to a better understanding of the people, that much learning evolves from doing, that developed friendships are eliminators of stereotyping and indifference, and that sharp breaks from the familiar facilitate professional and social growth.

A Working Model for Achieving Cross-Cultural Learning

The Inservice Teacher Cultural Immersion Model which follows has been used by Indiana University to place one hundred twenty-two inservice teachers in summer graduate practicum positions in distant American Indian communities. The cultural practicum course has been developed and offered annually so that any teacher may have a relatively innovative and very personal opportunity to:

(a) learn more about Native Americans (history, culture, art, economics, aspirations, issues, etc.)

(b) test one's cultural adaptation and interaction skills

(c) develop genuine friendships with American Indians

(d) become more sensitive to other cultures, lifestyles, and world views

(e) practice being a minority person while building professional and social credibility within an unfamiliar community

(f) contribute energy and time in the form of unpaid volunteer work within Native American agencies, homes, or activities

(g) acquire knowledge, materials, references, and outlooks to be used "back home" to teach more accurately and thoroughly about Native Americans

(h) experience minority people as the major instructors in a setting far removed from the learner's familiar friends, home, town, school, and university.

The same model, with obvious content modifications, can be used to place inservice teachers in Hispanic communities, Black communities, White Appalachian communities, diverse inner city settings, etc. Teachers do exist who truly desire to diversify and enlarge their circle of good friends. Agencies and people within all cultural groups also exist who are pleased to meet, host, teach, and befriend thoughtful and maturing teachers from any school, state, or social background. There is much to be learned by "walking for a few weeks in another person's moccasins." The model described represents one way to make that walk productive and unforgettable. With local modifications, the model could also work for other universities or for school systems where cultural learning is a prime goal of inservice education programs.

Characteristics and Components of a Model for Cultural Immersion

A. University Demography	(a) required 3 semester hour graduate course (Cultural/Community Forces and Schools)
	(b) optional 3-6 hour graduate "Ethnic and Cultural Practicum" course
	(c) required readings, preparatory conference attendance, minimum of 6 weeks placement in cultural site, weekly cultural synthesis reports
	(d) open to all teachers from all certification areas and all states
	(e) offered in Semester I, Semester II, and Summer (June 8 - August 8 approximately). Most participants select a summer placement.
	(f) frequently used as electives in Masters program and as graduate credit leading to salary increments
	(g) sometimes substituted for course requirements in the "humanities"
	(h) completed by 122 participants to date

B. Practicum Site Identification and Participant Recruitment	(a) Practicum director visits, writes, telephones potential Native American hosts between Sept. 1 - March 15 annually (b) Potential host receives role description for potential cultural practicum participant and list of host responsibilities (Jan. - March) (c) Cultural immersion practicum advertised in school districts and in university summer school catalog during January - February (d) Initial applications from potential participants received in February, descriptions mailed immediately, applications reconfirmed in early April.
C. Independent Preparatory Activities by Participant	(a) Potential participants read and abstract, and then submit 13 of 21 recommended articles pertinent to Navajo, Hopi, or Apache people. Examples: "The American Indians: In Praise of Diversity," a 1977 Teacher Corps publication. "Navajo Medicine" by Donald Sandner, Human Nature Magazine, July 1978. "Language and Art in the Navajo Universe" by Gary Witherspoon, University of Michigan Press, 1977. (b) Potential participants talk with practicum director by telephone, ask questions about living conditions, tentatively select a certain type of placement site from annotated list mailed to them.
D. Group Preparatory Activities	(a) Committed participants journey to Indiana University campus in late May for a Friday/Saturday cultural immersion conference involving: . viewing of commercial films like More Than Bows and Arrows, Haskie, The Long Walk of Fred Young . viewing home-made slide-tapes produced by former practicum participants who lived in traditional Navajo homes or served in selected Indian agencies . listening to Native American consultants . discussing provocative articles . examining evaluative reports of former participants . studying maps, site descriptions, etc. . considering cultural do's and don'ts

(b) Final selection of placement site and type of voluntary work is made with the practicum director at this conference. Sometimes site changes are made to better match the interests or personality of a participant.

(c) A few basic Navajo words are taught/practiced

(d) Cultural synthesis reports to be submitted weekly from the site are examined and explained in detail

(e) Car pools to or near Reservation sites are arranged by participants

(f) Graduate course registration/tuition payment is completed.

E. Actual Cultural Immersion Site Placements and Volunteer Work

(a) Minimum of 6 to maximum of 8-10 weeks between June 8 - August 15 (approximately)

(b) A variety of placement sites and work activities exist such as:

- Traditional home - assist with gardening, herding, crafts
- Health Clinic - outreach work with community health nurse
- Summer school program - teaching or counseling
- Recreation program - hiking, camping, swimming
- Employment Center - teaching, counseling, supervision of job interns
- Mission - teaching, provision of recreation
- School system central office - curriculum development
- Remote Trading Post - assist trader and assist community people with daily tasks
- Adult Education Program - teaching, counseling
- Youth Services - teaching, counseling, field trips, supervision

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F. Spin-off Activities and Representative Personal Involvement

(a) The volunteer work assignments lead to many invitations/opportunities to engage in such learning activities as:

- dialogues with adults
- dialogues with youth
- visits/meals in Indian homes
- attendance at traditional ceremonies
- attempts to weave rugs
- visits to relatives of host family
- exploring ancient Indian sites
- hiking, gardening, animal husbandry
- study of art forms, patterns
- exposure to legends, historical materials
- recreational outings with Native Americans -- rodeos, picnics, etc.
- participation in shopping trips, flea market sales, etc.
- mutual sharing of aspirations, apprehensions, basic outlooks

G. Academic Summary of Practicum Learnings by Participant

(a) Detailed weekly summarizations of practicum learnings are submitted which feature:

- description of volunteer work done
- identification of different types of cultural activities in which engaged
- two most significant events of the week and resultant personal insights
- three cultural values or issues perceived -- generalized statement accompanied by specific examples of the value "in use"
- implications the identified values have for professional and/or social behavior of the respondent
- discussion of the degree to which a selected local institution serves, or fails to serve, the local cultural group
- discussion of the respondent's major "triumph" of the week
- discussion of the respondent's major problem of the week

(b) Lesson plans, scrapbooks, or curriculum materials are prepared for "back home" teaching

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H. Evaluation Activities

(a) Project Director meets with or telephones supervisor at host site to discuss performance of the volunteer worker

(b) Supervisor at host site elects to participate in the project the next year based on performance/adaptation of past volunteers. (only 4 of 122 placements were judged by hosts as "unsatisfactory")

(c) Site visit by a member of project staff

(d) Participants provide structured, evaluative information at the end of the cultural immersion experience such as:

- rankings of cultural learning activities by their degree of personal effectiveness/ impactfulness
- adjectives describing selected components of the experience
- continuum ratings of the value of certain placement site activities and interactions
- listing of close friendships made
- spontaneous statements about the host cultural group
- listing of curricular materials acquired/ prepared for use "back home."
- description of the most significant personal outcomes of the cultural immersion experience

Participant Evaluative Data and Perceptions

In addition to the weekly culturally oriented assignments, all Practicum participants complete a final evaluation survey. This survey includes questions relating to other in-depth cross-cultural experiences the participants may have had prior to the Reservation Practicum as well as to personal and professional gains they feel they have acquired as a result of this latest cultural immersion. In Part A of the survey the participants are asked to estimate the number of friendships they made while on the Reservation, what changes in behavior -- manners, actions, dress, etc. -- they made during their on-site experience in order to "get along" and perhaps serve more effectively, and also how they were able to gage their professional effectiveness in the new cultural environment. In Part B the questions deal with both professional and personal benefits accruing from the Practicum. The participants are then asked to rank participation in such an immersion type practicum with other possible cross-cultural instructional approaches such as attendance at specialized workshops, viewing culturally oriented films or enrolling in conventional university level sociology or anthropology courses. Finally, space is provided on the form for any unstructured comments the participants might want to add.

According to the results of the survey, only 10% of the Practicum participants had had any type of in-depth cross-cultural experience prior to going to the Navajo or Apache Reservations. One of that 10% had spent two years in Alaska living near a community of Native Eskimo; the others in this small group had spent from one to three years living and studying in a foreign country. Thirty-nine percent of the total group had had some experience teaching -- not necessarily living -- in the inner city, working in schools with a predominantly black population. The one black participant in the group surveyed,

although very aware of her people's struggles to gain equality of opportunity, comes from a predominantly middle class family. She did not consider her on-going experiences with the dominant white society as an "in-depth cross-cultural experience." For the remaining 51%, exposure to the values and issues which affect the daily lives of our nation's minority peoples came from college courses, reading and viewing available media releases, and the academic preparation required by Indiana University of all prospective Practicum participants.

Not surprisingly, only 10% of the total group claimed to enjoy real friendships with Native Americans prior to their recent stay on the Reservations. This figure changed dramatically by the conclusion of the Practicum. Every participant reported at least one good friend as a result of the experience. One person cited 40! The average number of estimated friendships made was 10, with the majority naming 5 or 6.

Important Learnings, Important Changes

The "most important things" learned by the participants throughout the course of their service on the Navajo and Apache Reservations range from political, economic, educational and social issues to religious and philosophical value systems. The following statements were made and referred to again throughout the survey.

- A new awareness of what it means to be living in and coping with two different cultural worlds
- The Navajo culture is still strong -- despite the seeming Angloization of some, and the problems caused by alcoholism and unemployment.
- The traditional aspects of Navajo and Apache culture including close family ties, an emphasis on reciprocity and sharing, a holistic approach to healing physical, emotional, and spiritual problems, a present time orientation, a deep love of children, and a precious regard for the earth and all that comes from it.
- The "American" tendency is to interpret Indian philosophy in Anglo rather than Indian terms.

- Native Americans are still discriminated against in off Reservation communities -- in housing, law enforcement, employment, business, and recreational situations.
- The Native American's relationship with the dominant society and the Federal Government is extremely complex. There are no easy solutions to problems involving land, energy development, education for Indian youth, business development on the Reservations, taxation, representation, etc.
- Native Americans are very concerned about the quality of education being offered to their children.
- Most Navajo and Apache live under conditions which would frighten most Anglos, yet enjoy life more than some of us would think possible.

Speech modifications and more attentive listening habits constitute the two major changes made by the survey participants in order to integrate themselves more fully into their new communities. Clearer enunciation, a slower tempo, lower voice level and a more focused approach to a subject -- as opposed to "chatter" -- proved to be crucial factors when communicating in life task, work, or school situations. Interestingly, these modifications of speech habits were made successfully by participants who worked in both ESL and non-ESL situations. A majority of the participants (60%) reported themselves speaking less, and listening more actively than ever before. They learned the importance of waiting until their interlocutor had really finished saying whatever it was that she/he had in mind before interrupting or intejecting or even adding a personal commentary. As one participant put it, "I became patient with my impatience." Learning to cope with a more relaxed way of achieving, curbing frustration and the desire to criticize individuals or seeming inefficiency, using humor in a new way, -- as a disciplinary measure as well as for strengthening bonds of friendship --, being less "pushy", and taking on a more reserved, conservative, modest, less individualistic stance were other means by which the participants succeeded -- beyond expectation -- in both "doing the job" and making friends.

Participants in the Practicum engaged in a variety of tasks and activities. While some were actively involved in the daily chores of a more traditional herding/farming lifestyle, others were associate workers in health clinics, teachers in summer schools, recreational aides, Youth Corps or CETA supervisors, or tour guides at a National Historic Site. All were naturally concerned about their effectiveness as teachers, co-workers, supervisors, writers and friends in surroundings and situations which seemed alternately very familiar, yet vastly different from anything they had encountered previously. By the end of the Practicum, however, certain criteria for determining (gaging) their effectiveness developed. Foremost mentioned (98%) was the increasing friendliness with which they were regarded by both Native American colleagues and new acquaintances. Invitations to socialize and share family outings, an increasing depth and variety of conversation, Navajo or Apache requests for help in filling out forms and writing letters, an eagerness to introduce the new friend to family members, an overt interest in the participant's background, family, home-style, completed tasks -- writing a grant proposal, or remaking the mud roof of a hogan --, colleague and supervisory feedback, less supervision on the job were often the strongest signals that the newcomer was accepted and doing fine. Having quiet, seemingly apathetic pupils turn into active learners was another. Unexpected farewell parties and gifts were a frequent bonus. Job offers, too, were presented. At the present time, eight previous participants enjoy full-time positions in Reservation schools or agencies.

Teacher Preferred Approaches to Cross-cultural Learning

Given the variety of instructional approaches used by the nation's universities and school systems to orient teachers to and inform them about specific

cultural groups, Practicum participants were asked to rank the following options.

a. Listening to lectures/presentations at specialized workshops
b. Attendance at workshops run by ethnic minority consultants
c. Participation in a "cultural immersion practicum" in a different setting
d. Viewing culturally oriented documentary films and TV programs
e. Reading articles, fact, and fiction about ethnic minority groups

Eighty-five percent of the respondents to the evaluative survey contend that participation in a "cultural immersion practicum" is the most effective approach for learning about a new/different cultural group. Participation in a culturally specific workshop run by consultants from that culture, viewing culturally oriented documentary films, listening to lectures and reading were generally seen as helpful in a descending order. In order for the immersion experience to be most beneficial, however, a number of the participants felt all the approaches should be used, but in the reverse of the order just given.

When asked whether they believed all preservice teachers -- student teachers and candidates for certification -- should be required to complete a cultural immersion field experience of some type and of reasonable length within the teacher preparation program, 36% responded in the affirmative. The remaining 64% said such opportunities should be available for those who desire it but not required. It is interesting to note that none of the respondents felt that cultural immersion options had no place in a teacher training program.

Regarding inservice teachers, the survey offered five choices, with the option of adding one or more unlisted approaches. The options listed were as follows:

____a. Cultural immersion practicums should be available to all inservice teachers at all teacher training institutions (be part of graduate training)

____b. Only those inservice teachers who actually teach ethnic minority group pupils should be encouraged to take part in a cultural immersion practicum

____c. All inservice teachers could benefit by taking part in a cultural immersion practicum

____d. No inservice teacher should ever be required to participate in a cultural immersion practicum

____e. All inservice teachers should be required to take some type of culturally oriented workshop with carefully selected readings, films, and a knowledgeable consultant, preferably from the ethnic minority group under consideration

The tallied responses indicated maximum interest in statement "a," less interest in "c" and "e" in that order, some small interest in statement "d," and practically no interest in statement "b." (Three responses in total) One teacher summed up her position thusly:

> "I feel very strongly that even if a teacher never encounters a minority student -- especially if she/he never encounters a minority student -- a fundamental aspect of education is understanding and ACCEPTING other ways of life, other views. A teacher's outlook can greatly influence that of his/her students and unfortunately, tolerance isn't an innate quality. Since people may not learn it in the natural course of educational training, some sort of culturally oriented practicum, in my opinion, should be mandated within the teaching curriculum. There is nothing we can teach which is more valuable than open-mindedness."

Personal and Professional Benefits

Teacher volunteers working in Reservation schools listed a variety of benefits stemming from the experience. Seventy-five percent compiled mini-libraries and/or bibliographies of materials -- printed, pictorial, and taped -- about the Southwest, the numerous Indian cultures represented in that region. Tribally related history, and the various political, economic, social, ecological and educational issues facing Native American peoples today were documented

for use in mainstream classrooms. Most readily available texts and history books when dealing with Native Americans -- the teachers noted -- need to be examined carefully. So often what is reported is "not always accurate or comparable with personal experience." Culturally related myths and legends, proverbs, taboos and symbols, recordings of pow wow music and three days of video film focusing upon an Apache girl's puberty (Sunrise) ceremony also number among the new instructional materials gathered. Arts and crafts items including rugs, silver and turquoise jewelry, sandpaintings and pottery have been brought back -- to both grace individual homes and to stimulate student interest and artistic expression at school. Some teachers made an effort to learn a few Navajo expressions in order to later incorporate some foreign language learning into multi-cultural units in their home schools.

Interaction on a daily basis with both Native American children and educators led to a self-reported heightened sensitivity towards children's needs and achievement patterns on the part of the teacher volunteers. The following comments reflecting desirable behavior or approaches to teaching are indicative.

- Being more open-minded and less critical
- Expecting children to do well rather than trying to make them do something
- Seeing the child in relation to his family or group rather than as an isolated individual
- Becoming more sharing of one's knowledge, talents, etc.
- A desire to promote interest in and show the commonalities between the value systems of the dominant society and Native Americans
- Recognizing the absolute necessity of relating the content material being presented to the child's frames of reference -- using supplementary materials whenever possible
- Teaching all children to respect themselves and to be proud of the beauty they are born with
- Sharing. Several teachers expressed the intention of creating pen pal relationships between children in their home communities and Reservation schools

- Respecting children as small adults capable of taking responsibility
- To be effective, teachers must openly respect, if not share in local cultural activities. Pupils' homes should be visited, parents consulted whenever possible
- Teachers of minority students shouldn't expect (stereotype) them to act like "Navajos" (for example) -- but accept their behavior as individually produced within a particular cultural environment

In the classroom, the importance of hands-on activities was stressed, as well as the benefits of group work, and peer teaching. Most Native American children being non-competitive and group-oriented need to be stimulated to learn in a variety of ways. Praising a child in front of a group or raising one's voice in anger or reprobation may have the opposite of the desired effect. Teachers new to the Reservation felt that meeting the challenge of providing alternatives to "what always seemed to work at home" in both lesson planning and presentation would help them to be more responsive teachers in general, less apt to teach a class as a monolithic unit. A majority (85%) of the teachers mentioned having gained a new awareness of cultural differences, of what it means to be in a minority position, and a desire to somehow implement this awareness in the classroom and among fellow teachers.

Open-mindedness, flexibility, friendliness, tact, maturity, perseverance, honesty, sincerity, and an adventurous spirit are the characteristics listed most frequently of the type of person most likely to fit in and interact successfully in Native American communities. People who don't mind isolation, who don't get frustrated easily, who are self-giving, who can put material comforts, personal likes and dislikes aside for a while, people who really want to learn about another culture by fully participating in it, those who are willing to laugh at themselves, to change and to grow will find "a helping hand at every turn." As one recent participant put it, "the Navajo culture is very pleasurable. As a people the Navajo seek and accept enjoyment, which makes it

pleasant to be with them." However, participants caution, one mustn't expect to be courted, praised, or even thanked as you might expect to be if doing volunteer work in another setting in the dominant society. On the Reservation, people are pretty much expected to do the job required of them without a lot of force-feeding, feedback, or fan-fare. In conclusion,

> "Anyone who hopes one day to help others learn about and appreciate different cultures would benefit from first being immersed in a different culture himself. If the person is truly open to the frustration and elation such a cultural immersion can bring, it can be counted among the most satisfying experiences of a lifetime."

Other significant personal outcomes of the Practicum are best quoted:

> I am more accepting of different ways of believing and living, more interested in other societies.
>
> As a result of this experience, I think I will always be somewhat less preoccupied with <u>outcome</u> and focus more upon the process, the activity.
>
> I feel a sense of inner tranquility calmness, peacefulness; I am more self-confident, more independent more spontaneous, more free.
>
> I finally <u>know personally</u> some Native Americans -- their hopes, interests, and concerns. I feel the completeness of the Navajo way of life -- a synthesis of God, nature, and man.
>
> Engaging in this Indian Project has been the best possible move I could have made. The experiences I've had here have been rich of culture, tradition and excitement. I have learned so much about myself and how to get along with, become friends with and teach people of a different race. My students have taught me just as much as I've tried to teach them. I have found strength in myself and feel able to handle many more situations that previously were stressful. The amount of growth one can do while out here is miraculous!

In conclusion, this type of cultural immersion practicum is not for everyone, but everyone can benefit from the communication taking place because of it -- children, parents, fellow teachers, and friends. Historically, the dominant society is "at peace" vis a vis the almost 500 Native American clans and tribes represented with the greater United States. But, as one very perceptive

participant described it, "Peace is sacred, a way of life and there is no separation of personal peace in human relationships when both are characterized by wisdom and graciousness." It is for that particular peace that we aspire when we advocate "walking in another's mocassins."